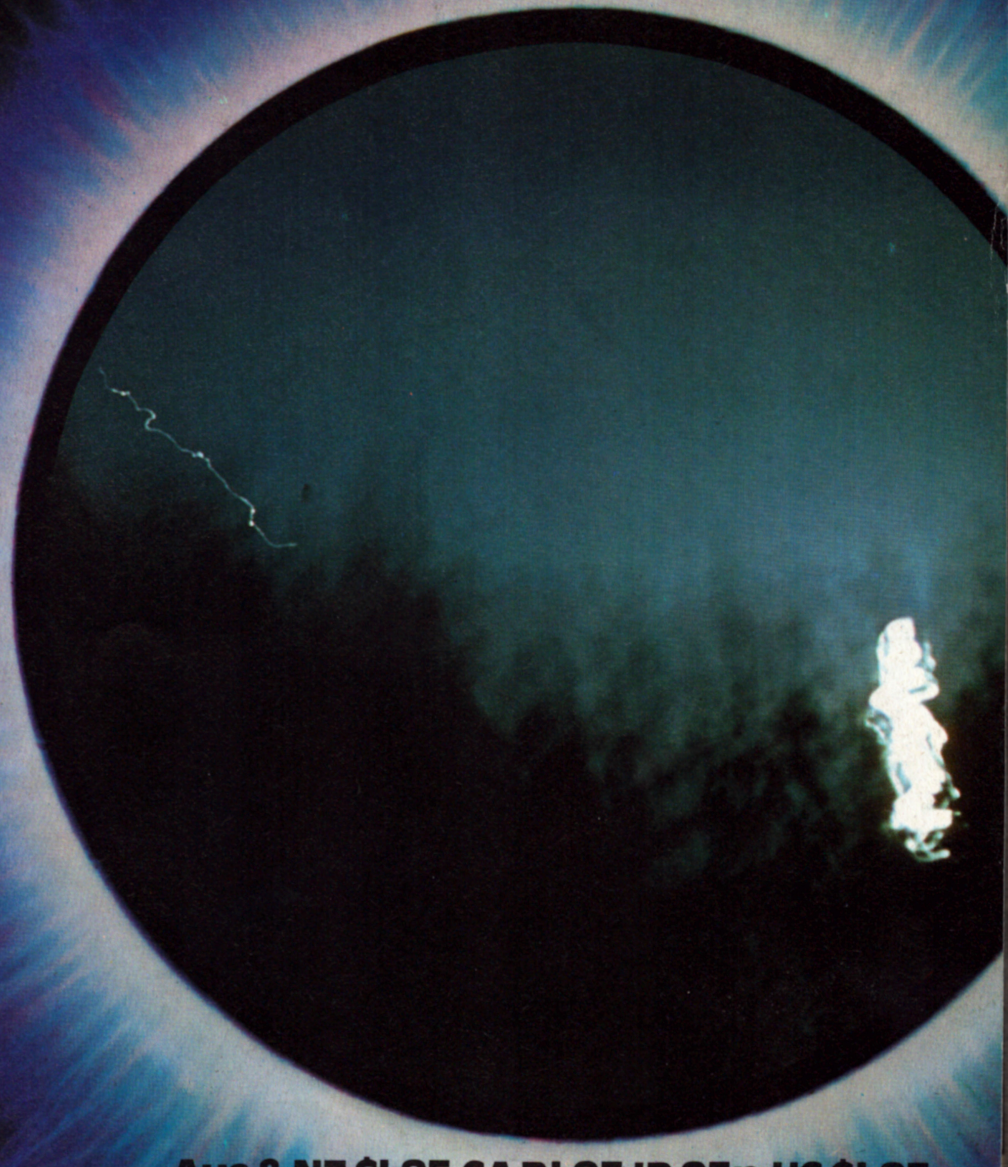
65p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Geller's guru
Betty and Barney's lost hours
Just a coincidence?
Changing the past
Southcott's saga

136



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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue
The wild accusations of hysterical girls began a nightmare for the God-fearing inhabitants of a small Puritan community; we trace the horror in **Salem witches**. As the poltergeist troubling Carla and Thierry becomes more insistent, the victims are forced to flee to the other side of the world. See **Classic poltergeists**. Was the **Ummo** case a near-perfect hoax – perhaps government-inspired – a perverse joke by non-human entities, or a genuine series of close encounters? Convulsions that led to extraordinary powers of healing were just one aspect of the bizarre events centred around the obscure Parisian churchyard of **St Médard** in the early 18th century; we reassess the stories. And in **Joan of Arc** we investigate the secret of her power – and the source of her fanatical inspiration.
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A night to remember

After Betty and Barney Hill had seen a UFO at close quarters, Betty dreamed she had been abducted and scrutinised by an alien species. But were her dreams based on fact? HILARY EVANS reports

IN SEPTEMBER 1961 BETTY HILL and her husband Barney were taken on board a spacecraft from another world, subjected to examination and given information by the alien crew members. That, at least, was what the Hills believed. Though their case is one of many, and more of the same kind are constantly being reported, it is uniquely important as one of the earliest, most fully documented and most thoroughly investigated. Whether their experience was just what it seemed, or some kind of fantasy, it is important that we should know exactly what happened to Betty and Barney Hill that night, for it is part of a widespread pattern.

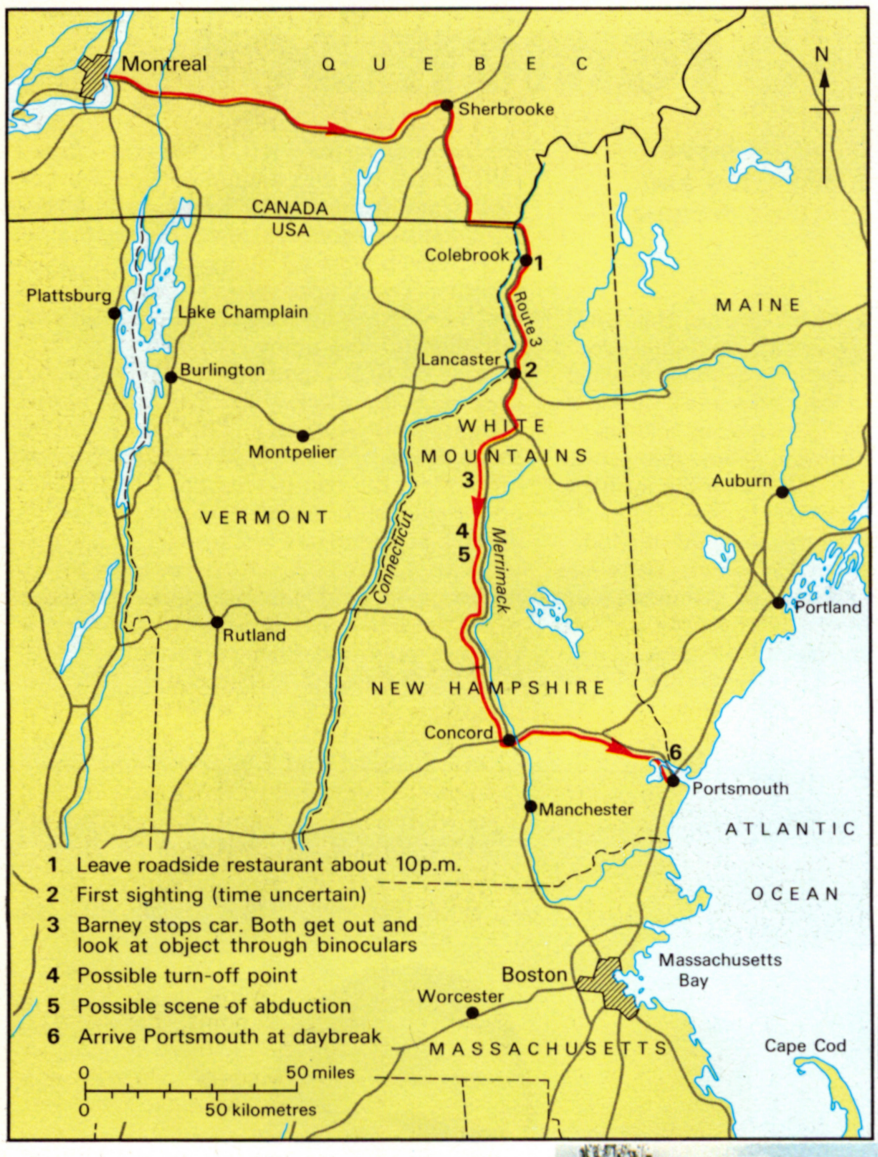
The Hills lived at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the eastern United States. Barney, who was black, was aged 39 at the time; he worked as a mail sorter in Boston, a job he was glad to have, even though it was somewhat below his capacity, and involved not only night work but also a daily car journey of 60 miles (100 kilometres) each way. Outside his work Barney was active in the campaign for civil rights for blacks; Betty, aged 41, was a child welfare worker. Both had been married before and had children by their earlier marriages, though the children were all living with their other parents. To all appearances it was a happy and successful marriage: the couple were popular and had many friends.

Betty and Barney Hill, who were returning from a short vacation when they claimed to have seen a UFO during a night drive along a lonely highway in New Hampshire. Two years after the incident they were both suffering from chronic ill health and nervous disorders. Betty was experiencing disturbing dreams, and Barney complained of stress, exhaustion and other anxiety symptoms

Late on 19 September 1961 the Hills were driving home after a short holiday trip to Niagara and Montreal. They were driving through the night because they had run low on money, the trip having been undertaken on the spur of the moment. They stopped for a snack at a roadside restaurant, which they left a little after 10 p.m. to drive on down the highway, US 3. During their journey that night the Hills passed not a single other car and saw only one other person.

What happened to the couple then was described by Betty in a letter to a UFO investigator five days later:

> My husband and I have become immensely interested in this topic [UFOs] as we recently had quite a frightening experience, which does seem to differ from others of which we are aware. About midnight on September 20th we



were driving in a National Forest Area in the White Mountains, in N.H. [New Hampshire]. This is a desolate, uninhabited area. At first we noticed a bright object in the sky, which seemed to be moving rapidly. We stopped our car and got out to observe it more closely with our binoculars. Suddenly it reversed its flight path from the north to the southwest and appeared to be flying in a very erratic pattern. As we continued driving and then stopping to watch it, we observed the following flight pattern: the object was spinning and appeared to be lighted only on one side, which gave it a twinkling effect.

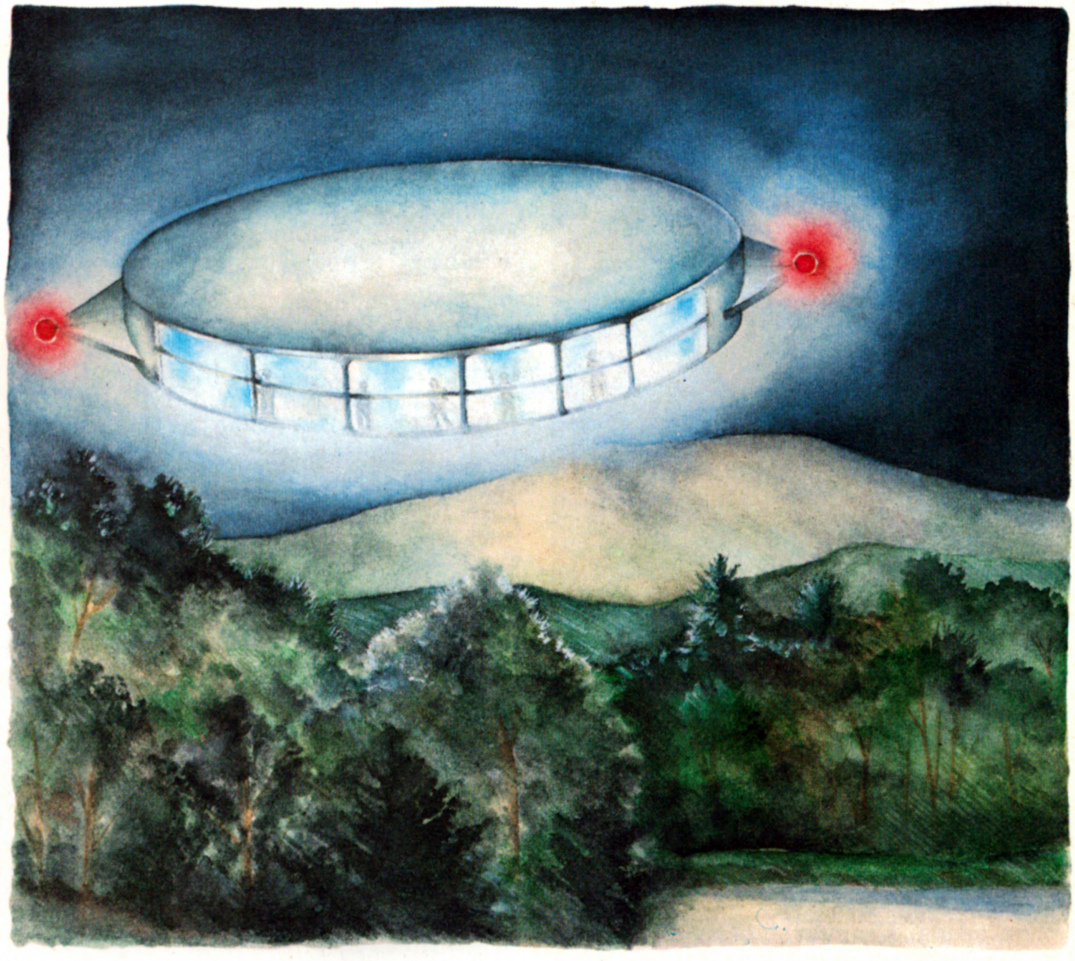
As it approached our car, we stopped again. As it hovered in the air in front of us, it appeared to be pancake in shape, ringed with windows in the front through which we could see bright blue-white lights. Suddenly, two red lights appeared on each side. By this time my husband was standing in the road, watching closely. He saw wings protrude on each side and the red lights were on the wing tips.

As it glided closer he was able to see inside this object, but not too closely. He did see several figures scurrying about as though they were making some hurried type of preparation. One figure was observing us from the windows. From the distance this was seen, the figures appeared to be about the size of a pencil and seemed to be dressed in some type of shiny black uniform.

At this point my husband became shocked and got back in the car, in a hysterical condition, laughing and repeating that they were going to capture us. He started driving the car – the motor had been left running. As we started to move, we heard several buzzing or beeping sounds, which seemed to be striking the trunk of our car.

This letter, written to Donald Keyhoe of the National Investigations Committee for Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), effectively summarises what the Hills remembered of their experience. What it lacks is the emotional response of the couple. John G. Fuller, in his definitive account *The interrupted journey*, describes the event in such terms as: 'Barney was fully gripped with fear now', or: 'with all his energy he ripped the binoculars from his eyes and ran screaming back across the field.' While these may be honest descriptions of what occurred, we must not forget that they are a journalist's words, describing what

Left: the route taken by Barney and Betty Hill on the night they saw the UFO



Below: the approximate place on highway US 3 where the Hills stopped their car and got out to look at the flying object, which Betty described as pancake-shaped, with windows in the front through which could be seen bright blue-white lights (right). The object also appeared to have fins tipped with red lights

was reported to him by others, and relating to events that had taken place some years previously.

It was not until 25 November, two months later, in the course of questioning by UFO investigators, that a 'missing time' puzzle emerged. Here are Barney's own words:

> They were mentally reconstructing the whole trip. One of them said, 'What took you so long to get home?' They said, you went this distance and it took you these hours. Where were you? Well, when they said this, I thought I was really going to crack up . . . I became suddenly flabbergasted to think that *I realised for the first time* that at the rate of speed I always travel, we should have arrived home at least two hours earlier than we did.

For they had taken seven hours to travel 190 miles (305 kilometres), on empty roads, often at 65–70 miles per hour (105–112 km/h).

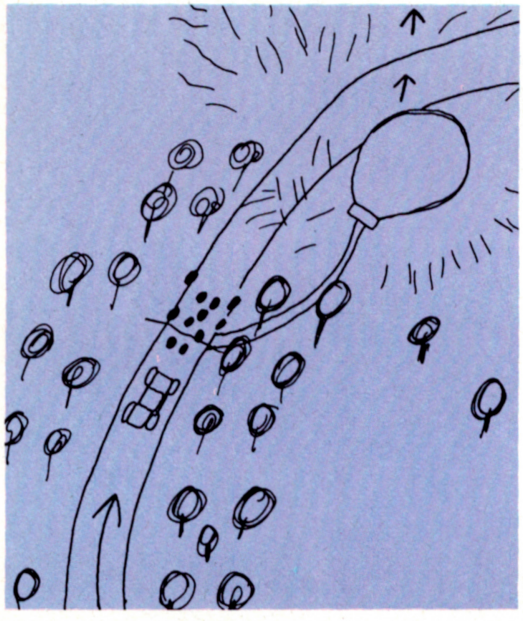
Disturbing dreams

Ten days after their return, Betty started to experience a series of disturbing dreams. At this date she had already written her letter to Major Keyhoe, quoted above, but had not yet been visited by any investigator; she had told friends and relatives about the experience and was not just puzzled but very disturbed by it. Not surprisingly, her dreams reflected her anxiety.

But they did more. While taking the UFO sighting as a starting point, her dreams seemed to continue the incident. They present a highly detailed account of happenings that, though bizarre, follow on logically from the sighting itself.

Betty's own account of her dreams is included as an appendix in Fuller's book. Unfortunately he does not indicate when the notes were made. Nor does he make clear how many dreams there were, and whether they repeated the same material, or whether some of the story was contained in each, as fragments that Betty later combined to form a coherent narrative. In other words, we cannot be sure that the smooth, continuous flow of her narrative was also a characteristic of the dreams themselves, or whether it was the result of her own re-telling of the dreams, in the process of which she must inevitably have imposed her own order and logic onto the dream material. Without questioning her sincerity and good faith, we must treat her account with caution. In the light of subsequent events, the coherence and detail of Betty's account of her dreams are of crucial significance.

The dream experience begins at a point immediately following the UFO sighting. Betty sees a very sharp left-hand turn in the road, which then turns back to the right. A group of eight or eleven men are standing in the middle of the road. Barney slows down,



and the motor dies. As he tries to start the motor, the men surround the car. The couple sit motionless and speechless: Betty is terrified. The men open the car doors, reach in and take Barney and Betty by the arm.

Next Betty seems to be walking along a path in the woods, with men ahead of, beside and behind her. Barney is similarly accompanied. She speaks to him but he does not seem to hear her: it is as though he is sleepwalking. The man on Betty's left, hearing her say Barney's name, asks if that is his name; she does not answer. He tries to assure her that there is nothing to be frightened of, no harm will come to them.

Soon they reach a small clearing, where a disc-shaped craft is parked: it is 'almost as wide as my house is long'. There are no lights or windows to be seen. They climb a ramp towards a door; reluctantly Betty goes in. They emerge into a corridor, curving with the shape of the disc. Betty is taken into the first room opening off the corridor, but Barney is led further along. When Betty objects, the 'leader' explains that only one person at a time can be tested in each room, and it will be quicker to examine them separately.

The men leave Betty in the room when a pleasant, reassuring man, who speaks English, enters; he is the examiner. He asks several questions about her age, her diet and so on. Then he makes her sit on a stool while he carries out a superficial inspection, taking samples of hair and ear wax, fingernail clippings and scrapings from her skin.

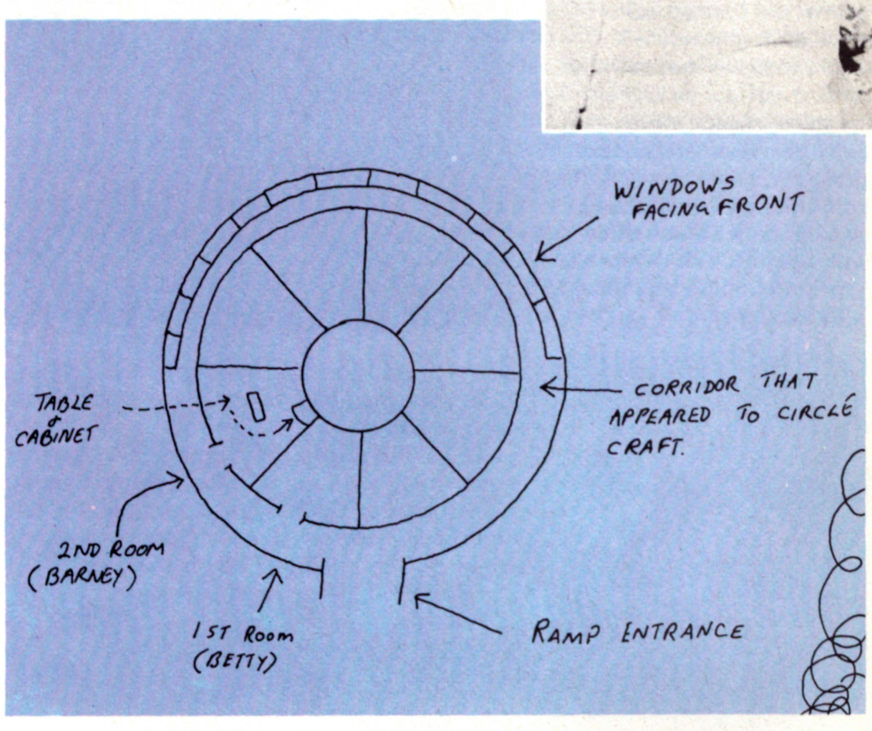
Next he asks Betty to lie down on a table. He examines her with a machine with needles on the end of wires, which, he explains, are to check her nervous system. During this test her dress is removed. With a needle 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 centimetres) long the examiner carries out what he calls a pregnancy test, which consists of jabbing the needle into her navel. The is extremely painful, but the leader, who has returned to the room to watch the examination, clears the pain by waving his hand before Betty's eyes. She senses his concern, and from this point she loses all fear of him.

That concludes the testing, and the examiner leaves to help with Barney, whose testing is taking longer. Left alone with the leader, Betty examines the room and chats with him. He apologises for frightening her and offers to answer her questions.

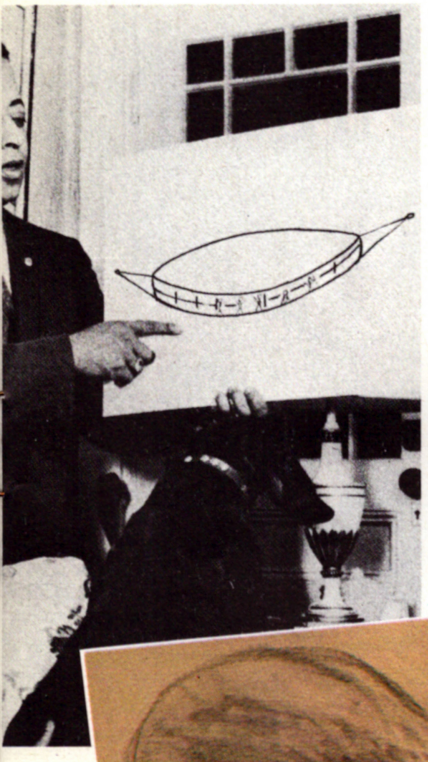
They are interrupted by some of the men entering; after a brief conversation, the leader turns to Betty, opens her mouth, and touches her teeth as though trying to move them. He is puzzled by the fact that Barney's teeth are movable while Betty's are not; so Betty explains about Barney's dentures. This leads to a discussion of old age, which the man seems not to comprehend, for he asks Betty about time and how it is measured.

Betty asks for some proof of the incident; the leader agrees and when she looks round the room and sees a book he says she may take it. Discussion of the book leads to questions about the Universe: the leader pulls out a kind of map from a case, on which are marked a number of stars. Betty tells him that she knows little about such matters, but there are others on Earth who do, and a meeting should be arranged with them. As she speaks, Betty is wondering whether she herself might be able to bring about such a meeting.

At this point some men return with Barney, who is still in a daze. When Betty speaks to him he does not answer. The leader assures her that he will be back to normal when they return to their car. They start to walk towards the door, and then one of the men says something that provokes an excited discussion. The leader takes the book away



Top: Barney shows his drawing of the spacecraft as he remembered seeing it, also with fins either side tipped with red lights, and members of the alien crew looking out of the windows. Although he had no conscious memory of being abducted, he was able after hypnosis to draw a plan (above) of the arrangement of rooms inside the craft, and a sketch of the area (top left) where the craft landed, showing the Hills' car on the highway and the group of spacemen (dots) who abducted the couple



from Betty, saying that the rest of the crew feel that no one should know of this experience – that even Betty herself will not remember it. She insists that she will remember somehow; he agrees that perhaps she will, but he says nobody will believe her.

They leave the disc and walk back through the woods. All the men accompany them. Betty tells the leader she is happy about meeting him and begs him to return. He says it is possible, but he cannot say for certain.

Barney seems to become more alert as they approach the car, but shows no emotion and behaves as though this were an everyday occurrence. They get into the car. The disc becomes a bright glowing object; it seems to roll like a ball, turning over three or four times, and then sails into the sky. Betty turns back to Barney and says it is the most marvellous, most unbelievable experience of her entire life. Barney starts driving. So far he has not uttered a word. She turns to him and asks, 'Do you believe in flying saucers now?' He replies, 'Don't be ridiculous!'

Intriguing though they were, Betty's dreams figured in the case only because they confirmed the impact made on her by the sighting. The investigators who visited the couple were concerned only with the waking experiences reported by the Hills. Walter Webb, an astronomer who served as one of NICAP's scientific advisers, was impressed by the Hills' testimony. In his report he wrote:

> It is the opinion of this investigator, after questioning these people for over six hours and studying their reactions and personalities during that time, that they were telling the truth, and the incident occurred exactly as reported except for some minor uncertainties and technicalities . . . . I was impressed by their intelligence, apparent honesty, and obvious desire to get at the facts and to underplay the more sensational aspects of the sighting.

Left: artist's impressions of the alien crew members of the spacecraft, based on the Hills' verbal descriptions. In Betty's dreams, the aliens put the couple into separate rooms aboard their craft and carried out a physical examination of Betty; they took samples of her hair and ear wax, fingernail clippings and skin scrapings, and made tests 'on her nervous system' using a machine with needles

Fears, real and imagined

Significantly, Webb went on to observe:

> Mr Hill believes he saw something he doesn't want to remember. He claimed he was not close enough to see any facial characteristics on the figures, although at another time he referred to one of them looking over his shoulder and grinning, and to the leader's expressionless face. However, it is my view that the observer's blackout is not of any great significance. I think the whole experience was so improbable and fantastic to witness – along with the very real fear of being captured adding to imagined fears – that his mind finally refused to believe what his eyes were perceiving and a mental block resulted.

In the course of the ensuing year, it was Barney's 'mental block' that gradually assumed overwhelming importance. His health deteriorated, and with it his mental state: his ulcer became more pronounced, he became exhausted and depressed. Seeking for a cause, it was not surprising that the Hills should wonder whether their UFO experience played any part in it. They suggested this to their doctor, who proposed hypnosis as a means of discovering more about the sighting and its effect on them. Already, during the investigation of their story, hypnosis had been proposed as a means of acquiring further data, so the Hills welcomed the suggestion.

But Betty had an additional reason for seeking what hypnosis might reveal: 'The moment they suggested hypnosis, I thought of my dreams, and this was the first time I began to wonder if they were *more* than just dreams . . . .'

The Hills' hypnotic 'recollection' of their experience is described on page 2746

When Joanna Southcott announced she was pregnant with the Messiah she was 64 – the year of her death. But the eccentric claims she made at the end of her life were as nothing compared to those made by later 'prophets'. FRANK SMYTH traces their progress

AS JOANNA SOUTHCOTT'S idiosyncratic ministry (see page 2670) gained momentum her pronouncements became increasingly bizarre. Eternal salvation would be the lot of only 144,000 souls; moreover, to gain admittance to heaven her followers would have to be 'sealed' by her – she began issuing what amounted to share certificates for a stake in paradise.

These certificates were half-page printed sheets reading: 'The sealed of the Lord – the elect precious man's redemption – to inherit the tree of life – to be made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ – Joanna Southcott.' The impression of her oval seal with its stars and the initials I.C. (Iesus Christus) was appended in red wax at the bottom.

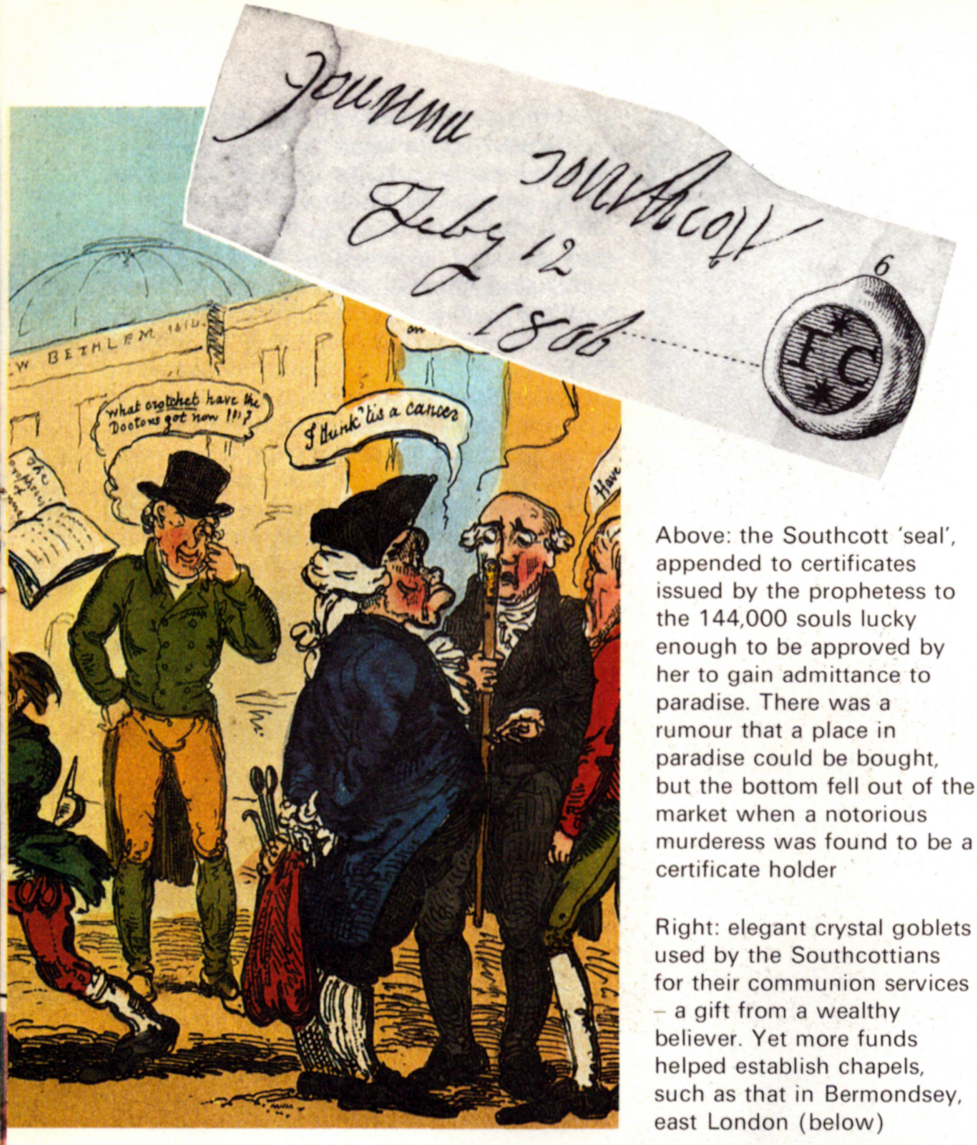
By 1805, when 10,000 of these certificates had been issued, Joanna was accused, probably falsely, of selling them; but even if the accusations were true the bottom fell dramatically out of the market in 1809, when a particularly brutal murderess named Mary Bateman was hanged publicly at York and – embarrassingly for Joanna's movement – was found to be a certificate holder.

In any case, money was plentifully forthcoming from other sources. In 1803 a second 'trial' – or public debate – of Joanna's prophecies was held before a wealthy invited audience at High House, Joanna's home in Paddington, London. Nearly 60 people received 'personal messages' when the sealed documents were opened and read out, and all of them made handsome offerings. Another source of income was the second 'Southcottian' chapel opened at Bermondsey, east London, the same year, where an apprentice, Henry 'Joseph the Dreamer' Prescott, and his spiritual manager Elias Carpenter 'dreamed' for the benefit of the poorer classes. And the working classes of northern England were catered for in the autumn when Joanna went to Salford, Leeds and Stockton-on-Tees, setting up chapels in each town. A third and final 'trial' of her writings took place before a packed crowd in December 1804, and to all intents and purposes 'Southcottism' was finally an established, if eccentric, part of English religious life.

At the height of Joanna Southcott's popularity, the 'prophet' Richard Brothers was released, a broken man, from the lunatic asylum at Islington, north London, and went to live quietly in St John's Wood. As both prophets had attracted the attention of the wealthy engraver William Sharp (see page 2672), Joanna's name had been linked with that of Brothers, although they had never met. Joanna's personal ambitions knew no bounds, however. Now she spent two days carefully defacing 1000 copies of Sharp's engraving of Brothers as the 'Prince of Hebrews', only to order Sharp to make a similarly dramatic engraving of herself in January 1812, for distribution among the faithful.

Her next public move, too, echoed that of

Above: a contemporary cartoon entitled *The imposter or obstetric dispute* showing the ridicule afforded by 64-year-old Joanna Southcott's announcement that she was carrying 'Shiloh' – the new Messiah, who would be born on Christmas Day. Oddly, eminent doctors agreed that she showed all the symptoms of pregnancy which, had it run its natural course, would have ended with the birth of a child on 25 December 1814. Sympathisers showered her and the unborn child with gifts (left), including – somewhat incongruously – a Bible, with which a Messiah would surely be familiar



Above: the Southcott 'seal', appended to certificates issued by the prophetess to the 144,000 souls lucky enough to be approved by her to gain admittance to paradise. There was a rumour that a place in paradise could be bought, but the bottom fell out of the market when a notorious murderess was found to be a certificate holder

Right: elegant crystal goblets used by the Southcottians for their communion services – a gift from a wealthy believer. Yet more funds helped establish chapels, such as that in Bermondsey, east London (below)

Brothers 18 years before – but was, if anything, more extreme. In the late summer of 1813 she wrote personal letters to every bishop, peer, and Member of Parliament, as well as messages to *The Times* and *Morning Herald*, announcing that she would shortly become 'the mother of Shiloh'.

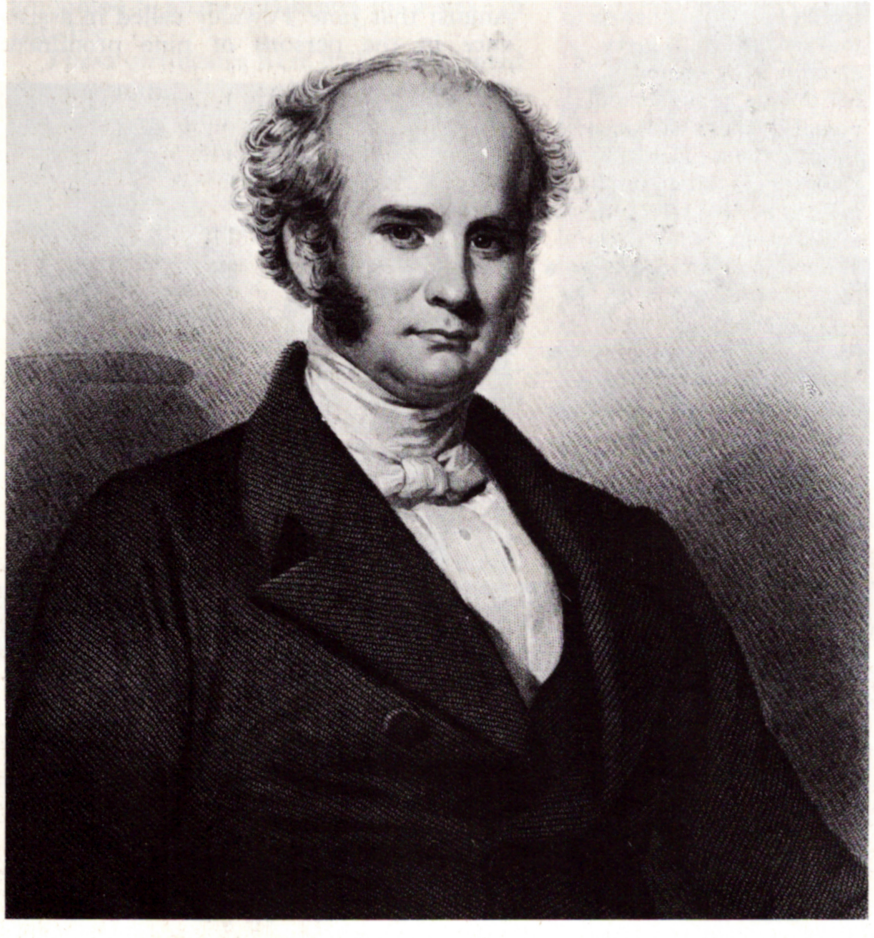
'In ten years from the fourth of the century,' she said, 'the Messiah will come.' On 13 October 1813 she retired permanently from public life to her house at 38 Manchester Street, Manchester Square, in London's West End, with two female disciples, Jane Townley and Ann Underwood.

In late March 1814 – 'ten years from the fourth of the century' – news leaked out that the prophetess was ill, but it was not until 1 August that Jane Townley called in assistance in the persons of nine prominent

medical men. They included Dr Joseph Adams, editor of the *Medical and Physical Journal*, Richard Reece, a leading fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and Dr John Sims, a fellow of the Royal Society and noted scientific polymath.

It was Dr Adams who issued a cautious statement about Joanna's health to the press on behalf of himself and his colleagues. Joanna Southcott was now 64 years old but, he confessed, in a younger woman her symptoms would indicate a pregnancy of four months; if such a pregnancy were to run its course, the child would be born on Christmas Day.

Not unnaturally, the news caused a sensation at every level of society. Medical aspects of the case were discussed avidly in the better newspapers and journals, while gifts of money, jewellery and clothing poured in to Manchester Street. In September a crib costing £200 was made to order by Seddons of Aldersgate, a leading furniture company, £100 was spent on a set of silver 'pap-spoons' while – somewhat superfluously perhaps, if the child were to be the Messiah – a richly bound vellum Bible, hand tooled and blocked in gold leaf, was sent to await the birth.



Top: Dr Richard Reece, one of the medical men who confessed themselves bewildered by Joanna Southcott's 'pregnancy'. It was to Dr Reece that Joanna announced that, instead of giving birth to the Messiah, she was 'gradually dying' – although he could find nothing wrong with her. Yet only a few days later she was dead

Above: the Rev. George Turner of Leeds, who took over the movement

On 19 November, however, when Dr Reece called to examine her, Joanna announced that she was 'gradually dying'. As far as Reece could see she was in good health, but nevertheless she insisted on giving him written instructions to 'open her body' four days after her death, and over the next few weeks all the gifts for 'Shiloh' were returned.

On Christmas Day, growing weak, she gave her last instructions to her female companions: her body was to be 'kept warm' until the post-mortem. And on 27 December Joanna Southcott died. On New Year's Eve Dr Reece performed the autopsy watched by Dr Adams and Dr Sims, and later published a pamphlet of his findings. As far as he had been able to tell there had been no physical 'pregnancy' and 'there was no functional disorder or organic disease in the body. Probably all the mischief lay in the brain, which was not examined owing to the high degree of putrefaction' – hastened, of course, by the blazing fires kept going in the house on Joanna's final instructions. It was, apparently, a classic case of hysterical pregnancy, but one that, had it run its course, would – in view of Joanna's claims – have been timed with uncanny accuracy.

Greater things in store

On New Year's Day 1815, Joanna was buried privately at St John's Wood cemetery, not far from the spot where Richard Brothers, her old rival, was to be interred 10 years later. On her tombstone were the words: 'Thou wilt appear in greater power.'

After Joanna's death her 'movement' was taken over by George Turner, minister of the Southcottian chapel at Leeds, who was assisted by Jane Townley. Their belief was quite unshaken by the non-appearance of Joanna's promised messianic offspring Shiloh. She had, after all, promised that he would be a 'spiritual man' and, reasoned Turner, this 'spirit' could have entered into any one of Joanna's followers. According to the Bible a 'prophet is without honour in his own country'; it would be unforgivable of the Southcottians not to recognise him when he did arrive. In effect, therefore, the title was open to all comers.

One of the first to claim it was Mary Boon, an illiterate who, like Joanna, came from Devon. Her prophecies were written out for her by John Ward, a Baptist lay preacher who had joined Boon when she began to prophesy in 1818, four years after Joanna's death. It was Ward, in fact, who was to be acclaimed second as Joanna's 'Shiloh', though George Turner and Jane Townley were suspicious of him. Ward had been born – significantly, some might think – on Christmas Day 1781 in Cork.

At 12 he was an apprentice shipwright in Bristol with a drink problem, but his alcoholism did not prevent him distinguishing himself on HMS *Blanche* at the battle of Copenhagen in 1801. When he was paid off two years later he gave up drink, married, and became a shoemaker – and turned to religion. Brought up as a Calvinist, he was then attracted to the Methodists and then to

the Baptists, finally taking up with Mary Boon. In 1826 he pronounced himself 'illuminated by the Lord' and declared himself to be Joanna's promised Shiloh, though he was popularly known as 'Zion' Ward; his wife, neglected and without income, pronounced him mad and brought him before the magistrate at Southwark, London, who committed Ward to the workhouse.

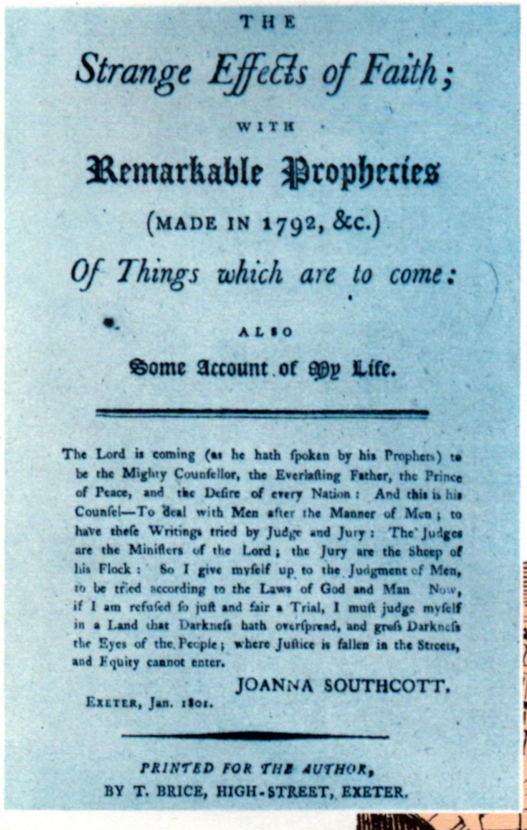
When he was released, he and a companion, Charles William Twort, evolved a new method of prophecy, divining meanings not only from the words of the King James Bible but also from the actual shape of the print; their enthusiasm gained them not only followers but 18 months in Derby jail for blasphemy, a punishment that was so unpopular that Parliament debated it and finally cut the sentences short. Ward, described as 'gentle, modest, with a high moral tone' and the preacher of 'spiritual pantheism', died at 91 Park Lane, Leeds, on 12 March 1837, already eclipsed by his more vigorous rival, John Wroe.

Wroe, a year younger than Ward, was the sickly son of a farmer from Bowling, near Bradford, Yorkshire. As a boy he had carried a window stone up to the second floor of his father's house, damaged his back and 'was never straight again'. In later years his hunchback lent his ranting sermons an extra aura of wildness.

Two years after Joanna Southcott's death in 1816 the first signs of mania appeared in Wroe, who was by this time established as a farmer and woolcomber, although he was very much in debt. He took to reading the Bible as he tramped through his fields, saw visions, fell into spontaneous trances and suffered temporary phases of – presumably hysterical – blindness.

In about 1820 he paid his visit to George Turner's chapel at Leeds but strangely, although Turner looked suspiciously on gentle John Ward, he was impressed by the wild-eyed Wroe. When Turner died in September 1821, Wroe took over his duties as 'Southcottian' leader – and the movement almost instantly fell foul of the law.

Fatal circumcisions, attempts to walk on water – and Joanna's box: see page 2758



THE

Strange Effects of Faith;

WITH

Remarkable Prophecies

(MADE IN 1792, &c.)

Of Things which are to come:

ALSO

Some Account of My Life.

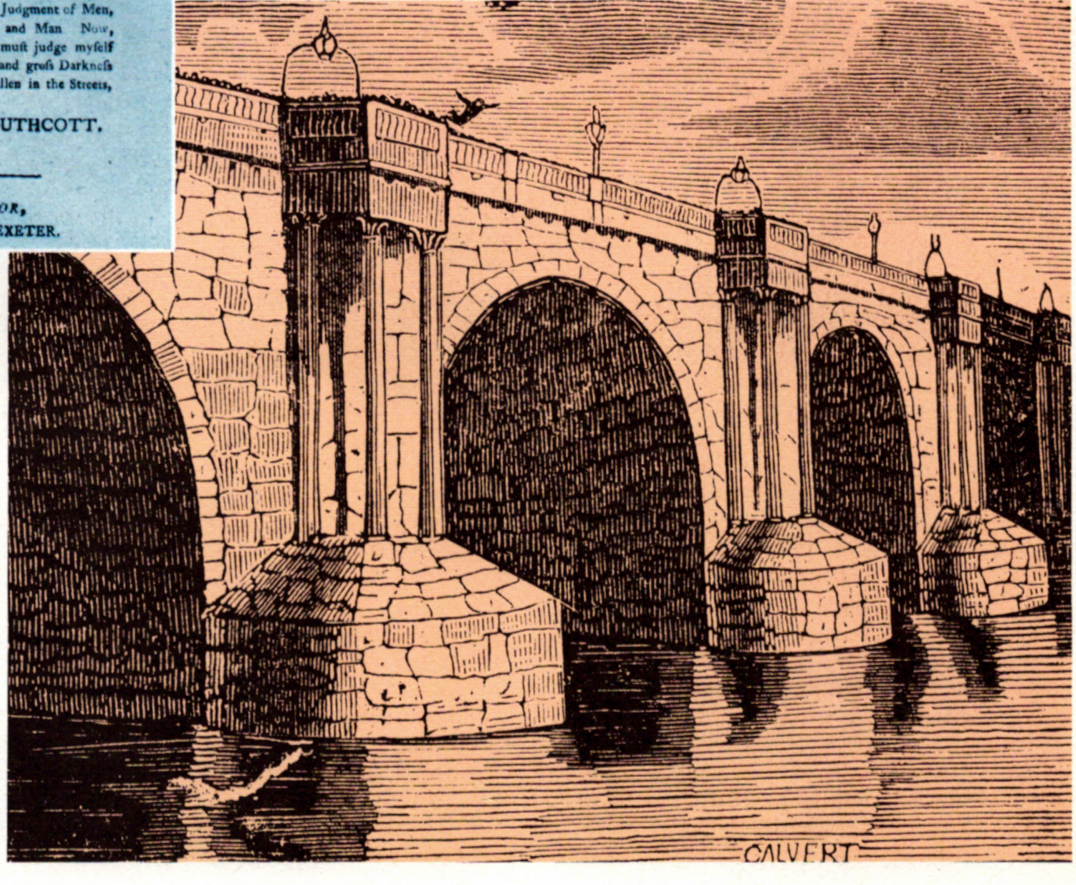
The Lord is coming (as he hath ſpoken by his Prophets) to be the Mighty Counſellor, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace, and the Deſire of every Nation: And this is his Counſel—To deal with Men after the Manner of Men; to have theſe Writings tried by Judge and Jury: The Judges are the Miniſters of the Lord; the Jury are the Sheep of his Flock: So I give myſelf up to the Judgment of Men, to be tried according to the Laws of God and Man. Now, if I am refuſed ſo juſt and fair a Trial, I muſt judge myſelf in a Land that Darkneſs hath overſpread, and groſs Darkneſs the Eyes of the People; where Juſtice is fallen in the Streets, and Equity cannot enter.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT.

EXETER, Jan. 1801.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY T. BRICE, HIGH-STREET, EXETER.

Left: the aptly named pamphlet *The strange effects of faith* by Joanna Southcott – for the lives of her followers were not, on the whole, remarkable for their conventionality. For example, one Southcottian leader, Benjamin Smith, flung himself from Blackfriars Bridge (below) in full expectation that angels would catch him. His fall was broken by a stone buttress, with fatal results. Only thus was he joined with the angels



Once in a lifetime

The subject of coincidences is endlessly fascinating – above all to those to whom they happen. MELVIN HARRIS recounts some extraordinary examples – and concludes that to believe in meaningful coincidence is not at odds with a rational view of life

A LIVELY CORRESPONDENCE on coincidences appeared in the *Daily Graphic* in 1905. Among the gems was a letter from the playwright Arthur Law. It told how, 20 years earlier, he had written a play featuring the sole survivor of a shipwrecked vessel, the *Caroline*. This fictional character was called Robert Golding. A few days after the play was first staged, Law was astonished to read a newspaper account of the sinking of a vessel called the *Caroline*. All hands had been lost, with one exception – a sailor whose surname was Golding!

The Nobel prize-winning physicist Wolfgang Pauli, for one, has concluded that coincidences can be regarded as the visible traces of untraceable principles. The American science writer Martin Gardner, however, remains sceptical: 'It is easy to understand how any one personally involved in a remarkable coincidence will believe that occult forces are at work.' Yet, even if there is no agreement on a definite answer to the question of what lies behind coincidences, it is undeniable that sceptics and believers alike find coincidences inescapably fascinating. For all coincidences make one wonder, and the more idiosyncratic examples never fail to fire the imagination.

Oddly enough, writers and musicians seem to have more than their fair share of remarkable coincidences – judging by their colourful after-dinner talk. Not every such tale is verifiable, but one event that is fully authenticated involved the world-famous oboist Leon Goossens.

In 1952, Leon Goossens lost his pocket diary on a bus. He quickly replaced it with a new one bought at the village shop near his home in Lewes, Sussex. Some weeks later, he lost the replacement diary – this time while crossing a field. The field was searched, but the diary remained hidden in the grass.

Over a year later Leon Goossens was walking across the same field, when he stopped to light a cigar – and spotted the lost diary close to his feet. By now, it was no more than a battered relic, but something prompted him to pick it up and flick through it. The months of sunshine, rain and snow had warped and split the bindings open, revealing that the covers had been stiffened with squares of newspaper. There was nothing surprising in that – millions of bindings are prepared in the same way. But in this case he found himself staring at a piece of newsprint that startled him. For there, pasted into the front cover, was a 19-year-old gossip column item referring to his own marriage in 1933. If the event had occurred in 1933 itself it would have been amazing enough. But considering the vast amount of newsprint that appeared during that 19-year-period, the odds against this coincidence are astronomically high – if they can be calculated at all!

It is little wonder that, when faced with events like these, people are led to think that there must be some form of guiding power behind 'meaningful coincidences'. They would certainly sense some such power in the next case – one of the most intriguing and moving in the annals of coincidence.

Leonhard Frank, the German playwright and novelist, gained international fame in 1926 with his novel *Carl and Anna*; it was converted into a play and later filmed. Encouraged by this success, he looked back at his very first novel, written in 1914 – *The robber band* – and decided to write a sequel called *The singers*.

In *The singers* Frank presented all the characters from *The robber band* in their middle age, with the spirit of adventure knocked out of them. Most of these characters were based on people Frank had known,

Left: the playwright Arthur Law, whose play *Caroline* featured one Robert Golding, the sole survivor of a shipwrecked vessel, the *Caroline*. Law's story was entirely fictional – but a few days after the play opened, he read an account of the sinking of a vessel called the *Caroline*. Its sole survivor was named Golding

Below: the German author Leonhard Frank and his wife Charlotte. Frank first saw Charlotte in the Romanisches Café (right) in Berlin in 1929, where he was struck by her uncanny resemblance to a character he had created. Haunted by her memory, he did not see her again for 19 years, when they met by chance at a farm to which they had both fled to escape the New York heat wave of 1948 (below right)

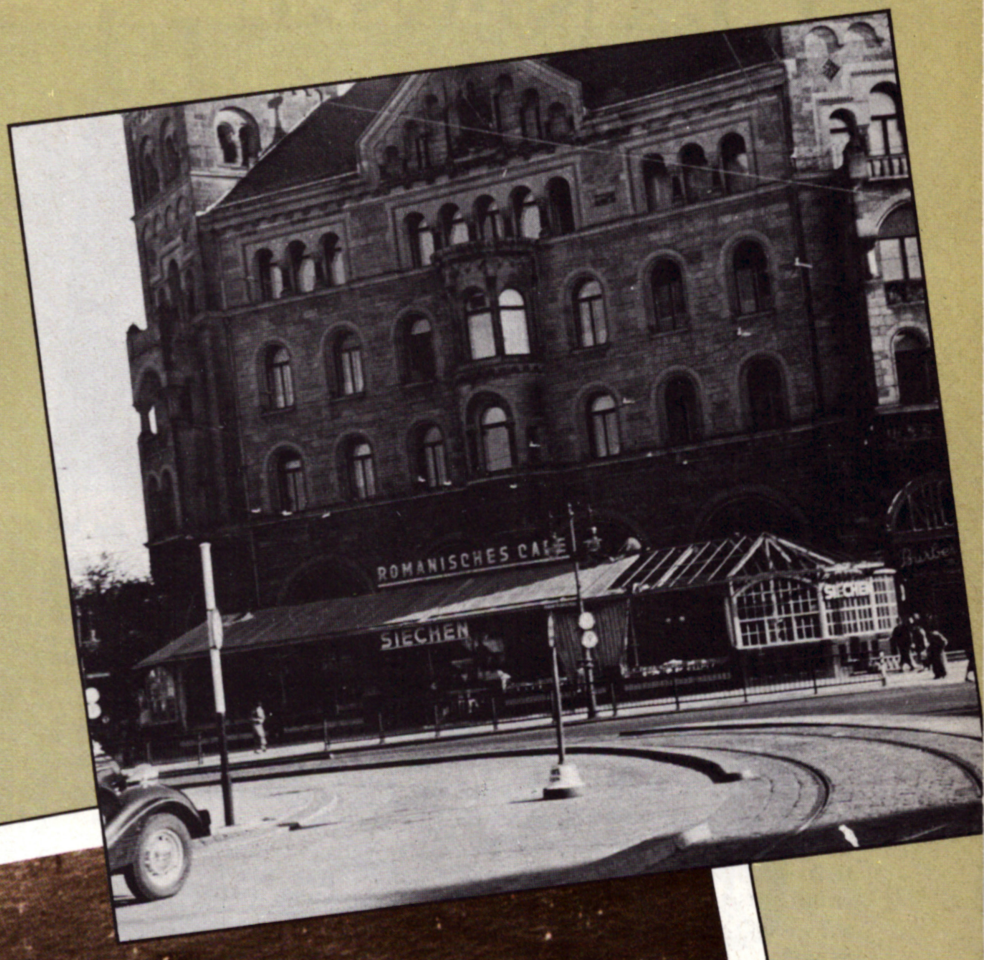
but there was one new character in the novel who had no basis in reality. This was Hanna,

> a graceful springy child, slender without being thin. A hot-blooded stranger, olive and rose-coloured, who made play, despite the innocence of her sixteen years, with all the qualities of seductive femininity

Frank was certain that he had created Hanna out of his own imagination; she was no more than his ideal of girlhood – a dream image modelled on no one he had ever met or known. *The singers* was published in 1927, and the author considered it his finest work.

Two years later, in Berlin, Leonhard Frank finished yet another novel and found himself spent and exhausted from the effort. He began to spend time idly sitting at the Romanisches Café in an attempt to relax his overworked brain. And there one day, close by, he saw the Hanna he had 'invented'. She wore a white beret perched on her shoulder-length, raven-black hair. And, just as he had pictured it, her delicate face was olive and rose-coloured. When she smiled

> she exposed a regular arc of teeth in her fresh, young, rather large mouth, involuntarily giving to her smile the



enchantment of a still-hidden gleam of womanhood – a hot-blooded girl standing on the brink of life.

What moved Frank more than anything else was her expression: 'emotional strength, suffused with humour and high-spirits, and in her eyes and mouth . . . an irresistible curiosity about life'.

As he watched her, Frank became aware that other customers and even the waiters were taken with the girl – her special qualities were obvious to everyone. It should have been an occasion for elation, but a melancholy feeling overwhelmed the writer – he was painfully conscious that he was 48 and this girl was hardly more than 20. Still, he had to follow his impulses and talk to this incredible creature. But before his chance came, a tall, thin youth hurried in, addressed the girl as Charlotte, apologised for being late and swept out holding 'Hanna's' arm.

For weeks afterwards Leonhard Frank haunted the café, hoping to see the girl once more – but she never returned and no one knew who she was or where she lived. Then, three years later, his last chance of meeting 'Hanna' disappeared. For Frank had to leave Germany to escape persecution, and perhaps death, at the hands of the Nazis. His exile eventually led him to the USA, where he worked as a Hollywood scriptwriter.

In July 1948, he found himself caught up in a record heatwave that hit New York. He began to suffer from attacks of giddiness, and left the city for the countryside. He went to a farm whose owner took in paying guests; he had stayed there the previous year.

Once at the farm, he sat on low garden wall calmly drinking in the cool air – and then his heart began to race. There on a bench in front of the farmhouse sat 'Hanna', the ideal who had stepped straight from the pages of his book. She looked just as she had looked 18 years earlier – only the clothes were different. He sat dumbfounded. He had found her – in a strange continent, out of 150 million inhabitants, on a remote farm to which only a few dozen visitors ever came!

He was content to wait until the next afternoon before speaking to her. Then he told her about the sighting at the Berlin café and about his search, and assured her that she was truly one of his characters. Without prompting, she immediately offered the name 'Hanna'. He was overjoyed that she too recognised the affinity, but his joy faded when she revealed that the young man at the café was now her husband. But Frank's passion was too great to smother and impulsively he tried to kiss her; but she pushed him away and for the next three weeks she avoided him. Then they met, danced and talked the whole night through and the next morning she rang her husband and told him that she must have a divorce. The husband dutifully bowed out and Leonhard and

Make News . .

somewhat after manner of horse-dealer displaying his wares.
The girls are so natural and beautiful that this is not disconcerting.
It's all due to nuts.

❖ ❖ ❖

PAINTER C. R. W. NEVINSON, latest psychograph victim, might have been either a great

YET there is nothing indecisive about his personality.
He is hot-headed, opinionated, virile. Laughs uproariously. Black hair turning grey. Bull-necked, and looks like a bull-fighter retired and running slightly to flesh.

❖ ❖ ❖

OBOIST LEON GOOSSENS is getting married a second time, at the age of thirty-six. His first wife was recently married in the United States to nephew of novelist Mary Roberts Rinehart.
He is considered finest oboe-player in the world. Also plays part of sporty gent. in spare time: yachtin', shootin', golf.

IS easily shocked, however. Drinks little. Has inverted-

Above: the celebrated oboist Leon Goossens. In 1952, he lost a pocket diary while crossing a field. Over a year later, he was walking across the field when he came across the diary. He picked it up – and found that the cover had been stiffened using a square of newspaper carrying a gossip column item about his own marriage, 19 years before (top)

Return of the rings

Stories of rings lost and found in the most unlikely of circumstances are among the most persistent in the annals of coincidence. In 1980 one Joseph Cross, of Newport News, Virginia, USA, lost his ring when it fell into floodwater during a storm. In February 1982 a restaurateur in Charlottesville, Virginia, found the ring – inside a fish. In Britain, on 28 March 1982, the *Sunday Express* and *News of the World* reported that, two years after farmer Ferdi Parker lost an antique wedding ring, a vet found it in a cow's stomach while performing an autopsy. On 13 September 1982 many British newspapers reported the remarkable tale of Joy Manley, who lost a ring 11 years earlier while working as a pillow stuffer in a bedding factory in Somerset. It was returned to her after Marshall Hazzan, of Wilmslow, Cheshire, investigated a lump in his pillow, found the ring and passed it on to the bedding firm. And the *Sunday Mirror* on 18 July 1982 reported the affecting story of pensioner Albert Thornton, who was weeding a flower bed at his home in Tolworth, Surrey, when he found his wife's wedding ring, which she had lost 15 years before. It was their silver wedding.

Charlotte were married. Small wonder that Frank found that these amazing coincidences 'confirmed once again my belief that accident in human life may be synonymous with destiny'.

Yet despite the allure and magic of such stories, there are other factors that must be considered dispassionately. We have to realise that in judging coincidences we are hardly able to evaluate the events realistically; the data needed are never fully to hand. A real-life example will serve to illustrate this.

Chance encounter

A BBC producer on his way down London's Oxford Street to Broadcasting House suddenly remembered a book sale that he had seen advertised. He reversed direction, darted down a side-street that led to the place in which the sale was being held – and bumped straight into an old friend from his schooldays in Wales. The friend still lived in Wales, was in London for the day and was in that street at that moment only because he had a last-minute change of plans. They were both amazed at the strange chain of circumstances that had brought them together.

But the producer began to make a few calculations. He reflected that for over 20 years he had walked along Oxford Street at least 20 times a week, but in all that time he had met only one person from his home town. And yet Oxford Street was a veritable magnet for visitors. So how many old friends had he *missed* meeting in all those years? Of course, there could be no answer to that question. But the question itself highlights the missing factor in most coincidences – for we never know how many pathways *fail* to converge. So we see coincidences in isolation and exaggerate their significance.

But for all that, who wants total knowledge? Most people are happy enough to cherish coincidences as happenings that add an extra sparkle to living – an attitude that is harmless enough and hardly at odds with a rational view of life.

Right: Oxford Street, London, on a typically busy weekday morning. A BBC producer, making his way along Oxford Street towards Broadcasting House one day, met an old school friend, who lived in Wales, in a side street. Both were astonished at the coincidence that had brought them together in such an unlikely place – but the producer later fell to wondering whether their meeting really was so very unlikely. He reflected that for over 20 years he had walked along Oxford Street at least 20 times a week; and Oxford Street is a magnet for visitors to London. What was perhaps more extraordinary was that he had not met *more* old friends

Geller's guru

It seems unlikely that Uri Geller would ever have risen to fame without his mentor Andrija Puharich – and equally likely that Puharich's bizarre beliefs ruined Geller's reputation. COLIN WILSON **sums up**

AT ABOUT 11 a.m. on 11 January 1971, the scientist and psychical researcher Andrija Puharich was sitting in his New York office when the telephone rang. A woman asked him if he had any comment to make about the death of the Brazilian healer, Arigo. Puharich had been planning to carry out detailed investigations into this famous 'psychic surgeon', and he asked the caller if she was quite sure that Arigo had died; she replied that she was. She gave Puharich her name and telephone number, and he spent the rest of the day trying to confirm the news. Eventually, friends in Brazil told him that it was true and that Arigo – whose real name was José Pedro de Freitas – had died in a car crash at 12.15 p.m. near his home in Congonhas do Campo, Brazil. Since there is an hour's difference between Congonhas and New York, the accident happened at 11.15 a.m. New York time, a quarter of an hour *after* Puharich had received the telephone call. When Puharich looked on his notepad for the caller's name and telephone number, they had vanished without trace.

The sensible and logical explanation for this bizarre sequence of events is that Puharich had simply mistaken the time when he received the telephone call, and that he had mislaid the woman's name and number. But what really puzzled Puharich was that, ever since he had started researching into the paranormal in the 1950s, he had had similar experiences. He believed that he had been selected as the 'target' for a series of seemingly preposterous events in order to force him to the conclusion that our scientific view of the Universe is too narrow and rigid.

This sequence of events began at the end of December 1952, when Puharich was conducting a series of laboratory experiments into telepathy. One day a Hindu scholar, Dr D.G. Vinod, visited Puharich and soon afterwards went into a trance. He began to speak in a deep, sonorous voice, quite unlike his own high-pitched voice, and with a perfect English accent. The voice identified itself as 'M', one of the 'Nine Principles and Forces' – superhuman intelligences who intended to help the human race.

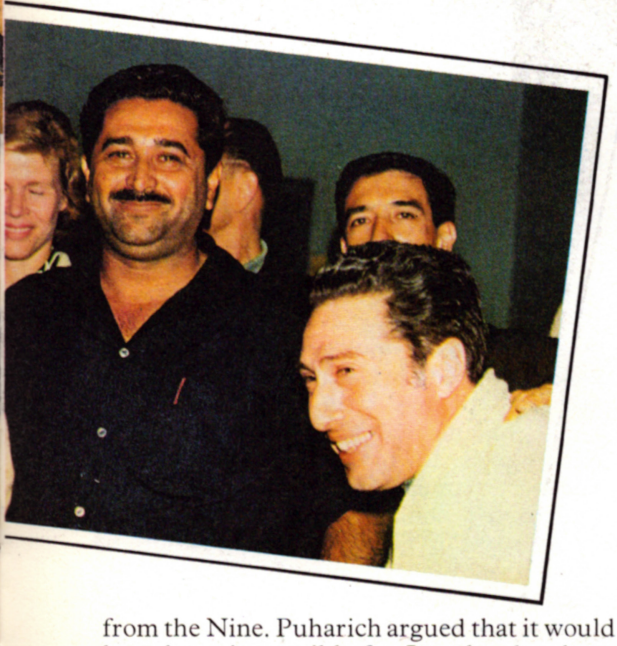
'M' spoke impressively and lucidly for 90 minutes and referred to a version of Einstein's famous equation relating mass and energy, and to the number seven which, apparently, was the key to understanding the

Above: Andrija Puharich, whose wide-ranging interest in the paranormal seems to act as a catalyst – psychics with extraordinary powers seem to spring up wherever he turns his attention. For example, the Hindu scholar Dr D. G. Vinod (right) went into a trance simply by entering Puharich's laboratory in 1952 – and apparently acted as a channel for 'M', one of the extra-terrestrials who take an interest in Puharich's work and the future of the Earth

mind and its paranormal powers. 'This is one of the most secret insights,' said 'M'. However, when Dr Vinod came out of his trance he could not remember anything of what he had said.

The next occasion when Dr Vinod went into a trance, a large ball of cotton-like material, consisting of strange threads, suddenly appeared on the floor beside him. Everyone present agreed that it seemed to emerge from out of the floor. And then the same voice expounded the philosophy of the 'Nine'. Puharich was very impressed by it because its utterances were more intelligent and contained more detailed information than those usually given by an entranced medium.

Three years later, Puharich was travelling in Mexico with the psychic Peter Hurkos when he met an American doctor, Charles Laughead. Once Laughead learned that Hurkos was a psychic he told him that both he and his wife attended sessions in which a young man went into a trance and delivered messages from 'space beings'. Puharich thought the Laugheads a little mad and forgot all about them until, one day, he received a letter from Laughead explaining that the 'space beings' had asked him to pass on certain information to Puharich. He was amazed to find out that the messages began 'M calling', and that they contained messages from the Nine. Puharich argued that it would have been impossible for Laughead to have found out about Dr Vinod's seances and the Nine; suddenly, it began to look as if the Nine might be more than an invention of Dr Vinod's unconscious mind.



Left: José Arigo, the world-famous Brazilian healer, with friends. In late 1970 he confided to a former president of Brazil, Dr Jusceliono Kubitschek (above), that he, Arigo, was about to die a violent death. Puharich, who had been planning to research the psychic surgeon's work, received a mystery telephone call telling him of Arigo's death in a car crash – 15 minutes *before* it took place. Instead of going to Brazil Puharich went to Israel – and met a young entertainer called Uri Geller

It was in 1963, when Puharich was on an archaeological expedition to Brazil, that he heard about Arigo and the way in which he would go into a trance and perform the most unlikely operations with an old penknife. (See page 378.) According to Puharich's informant, Arigo had started performing these operations in 1950 when he had been staying in an hotel with the politican Lucio Bittencourt, who was suffering from lung cancer. Early one morning, Arigo wandered into Bittencourt's room in a trance, holding an open razor, whereupon Bittencourt blacked out. When he woke up he had a large wound in his back and felt weak and faint; a medical examination showed that the cancer had vanished. As for Arigo, he could remember nothing whatsoever. He later became convinced that during these 'operations' his body was taken over by the spirit of a German surgeon, Dr Fritz, who had died in 1918.

Puharich was somewhat sceptical, but nonetheless drove to Congonhas to meet Arigo. The following day he watched him perform an 'operation' and was shocked to see Arigo thrust a penknife into a man's eye, scrape around vigorously while the eyeball rested on the patient's cheek, and haul out a large lump of pus. And, the very next day, Arigo hacked a lipoma – a benign tumour – off Puharich's arm with the same penknife. Puharich deliberately refrained from applying disenfectant to the wound yet, three days later, it had almost healed.

Puharich carried out a careful study of Arigo in 1963 and 1968, and tried out his German on Dr Fritz, only to discover that the doctor's German was as poor as his own. However, Puharich decided that Arigo's extraordinary surgical abilities were genuine and that he must have been taken over by an intelligence that had manipulated his body;

Space cowboys

There seems little doubt that it was Puharich's total commitment to the space beings – the 'Nine' – that led to the parting of the ways between Uri Geller and himself, and no doubt it lost him many other allies.

At one point the 'space beings', speaking on tape with metallic voices, told Puharich that they intended to land on Earth in their starship *Spectra* – unfortunately for his credibility they did not. Even so, the aliens continued to haunt

those around Puharich, such as medium Phyllis Schlemmer (left), who became the 'voice' for the 'Nine' after a previous psychic channel, Bobby Horne, left Puharich's home in confusion and disgust at apparently being the dupe of cosmic hoaxers who, in the words of author Colin Wilson, appeared 'to be led by the spirit of W.C. Fields'! Yet, even after splitting up with Puharich, his psychic collaborators have continued to receive messages from 'space beings' who have ceased to talk of Earth landings; they talk constantly – if vaguely – about universal peace.

moreover, this intelligence possessed 'second sight' because Arigo could diagnose a patient's illness simply by looking at him.

And then, in late December 1970, Arigo was visited by the former president of Brazil, Dr Jusceliono Kubitschek, and he calmly told him: 'This is the last time we shall meet. Soon I shall die a violent death.' He also told the editor of a local newspaper that 'my mission on earth is over.' Two weeks later, in a heavy rainstorm, the vehicle in which Arigo was travelling had a collision with a pick-up truck; Arigo died immediately.

At the very time that Puharich heard the news of Arigo's death, he had been preparing to make another trip to Brazil to carry out further investigations into his extraordinary powers. Instead, he went to Israel to see Uri Geller, who was demonstrating his psychic powers in a discotheque in Haifa. Puharich watched Geller mind-read successfully and saw him break a ring held by a woman merely by placing his hand above hers. The following day, in Puharich's hotel room, he saw Geller deflect a compass needle and then raise the temperature of a thermometer

Puharich's most famous protégé was Uri Geller (above), whose telepathic powers and paranormal metal-bending are still controversial, even among parapsychologists. But although Puharich's influence helped Geller to superstardom, it could be argued that he also brought about his downfall, through his open association with such people as Dr Charles A. Laughead (above left), who lost his post at Michigan State College after he declared he knew when the world would end – and the world continued to turn, as usual, after the given date

simply by concentrating on each object in turn. But the feat that really convinced Puharich that Geller must be a genuine psychic was comparatively simple. Geller wrote something on a notepad, then placed the pad face down on the table and asked Puharich to think of three numbers. Puharich chose four, three and two. Geller then told him to turn the notepad over, and the same numbers were writen on it. In other words, Geller had read Puharich's thoughts before he thought them. (See page 621.)

Who programmed Geller?

Puharich believed that Geller was an exceptionally gifted psychic who possessed unusual power. But in 1971, his investigations took a new turn. During an hypnosis session, which Puharich recorded on a cassette, Geller went into a trance and he described how, at the age of three, he had fallen asleep in a garden in Tel Aviv and had been awakened by a shining, bowl-like object above his head – apparently a spacecraft – and had been struck to the ground by a beam of light. But, as Geller recalled these events, a strange metallic voice began to speak from above his head. It identified itself as one of the 'space beings' who had 'programmed' Geller at the age of three, and it then announced that world peace was about to be endangered by an immensely destructive war that Geller could avert. However, when Geller woke up he could remember nothing about this. But as Puharich began to play back the recording of this voice Geller snatched the cassette – and it promptly vanished from his hand.

At a later hypnosis session, the voice of the 'space man' identified itself as one of the Nine. And, from then on, hardly a day passed without some extraordinary event occurring. On one occasion, for example, Geller dematerialised the cartridge of a pen that was locked in a wooden box. Later, he took Puharich for a drive at night and, to Puharich's amazement, saw a great disc-like craft in a field, with a blue flashing light above it. With considerable alarm, Puharich watched as Geller walked towards it and

Further reading

Stuart Holroyd, *Prelude to the landing on planet Earth*, W.H. Allen 1977
Andrija Puharich, *The sacred mushroom*, Gollancz 1959
Andrija Puharich, *Uri: a journal of the mystery of Uri Geller*, Doubleday (New York) 1974
Colin Wilson, *The Geller phenomenon*, Aldus 1976

Right: this photograph of an alleged UFO in mid-flight (jagged line on left) and a 'space being' (right) was taken by Puharich at Mill Hill, north London, on 24 May 1974. UFOs often seem to appear to those who are psychic in other ways, and although Puharich has – apparently – discovered such abilities in others, he has never made claims to be particularly psychic himself. He spends his time researching the chemical origins of life in his laboratory in Mexico (below)

climbed in. Ten minutes later he emerged from the craft and handed Puharich the cartridge from his pen. Meanwhile Puharich took many photographs of the craft, but when he went to remove the film from the camera he found that it had vanished.

Two years later Puharich retold this story, and many others, in his book *Uri: a journal of the mystery of Uri Geller*. Given Puharich's reputation as an investigator, it should have caused a worldwide sensation. In fact, Puharich's statement that Geller's powers came from 'space beings' was received with bored incredulity. If the Nine really existed, and they wanted to use Puharich as their vehicle to communicate with human beings, they had done their job too well. They may have convinced Puharich of their reality. But Puharich's book convinced the rest of the world only that he was either remarkably gullible, or mildly insane.

Yet, in spite of such reservations, it is impossible not to concede that Puharich is an investigator of rare quality – a genuine scientist who has had the courage to step beyond the bounds of narrow rationalism.

Power over the past

The observation theories of psi raise the extraordinary possibility that psychokinesis can change events that have already happened. JULIAN ISAACS examines the practicality of this claim – and suggests some ways of testing the theory and its implications

IF NO LIMITS in time or space can be placed on the possible influence of observers of a given quantum event, then *every* observer of a quantum event is potentially free to contribute his pennyworth of influence. The event itself will reflect the balance of all future influences contributed by various observers; it is as if the quantum event is an election result that shows the outcome of all the 'votes' – psychokinetic (PK) influences – to be cast in each direction by all future 'voters' (observers). The quantum event does not alter once it has happened, but happens in such a form as to reflect the overall effect of all later observers. This concept may seem extraordinary, but there is some evidence to show that this 'retro PK' effect really does exist. The implications for the science of parapsychology are staggering. First let us look at a now classic experiment to demonstrate the retro PK effect, which was performed by the German physicist Helmut Schmidt in the late 1970s.

Schmidt arranged for a laboratory assistant, who knew nothing of the details or purpose of the experiment, to run a computer-linked random event generator (REG) and to generate 12 sets of data consisting of the output states of the REG, which were not examined by anyone until the end of the experiment. Each of the 12 sets of data was stored in two forms – as audible clicks on audio tape cassettes and as holes in punched paper tape. The paper tape records were made because Schmidt thought that, while PK might alter the audio cassette records, it seemed impossible that it could punch holes or fill them in on paper tape. Comparison of the paper tape records with the audio tape records would reveal any discrepancies.

Several months after the 12 sets of data were generated, they were sorted into two sets of six by a random method. One set was simply kept securely until all the data were analysed. The other set was replayed, section by section, to a PK agent. The PK agent had succeeded in influencing the REG's output of clicks in previous experiments in which he had listened to its output 'live'. This time he listened to its several-month-old output, but was not told that he was listening to recorded, rather than live, clicks from the REG. The PK agent thought it was a normal PK experiment just like the previous ones.

Schmidt then used a computer to analyse the data on all 12 cassettes and paper tapes. The paper tape records and the cassettes all agreed exactly. Those that had not been selected for playing to the PK agent contained REG output states in a random distribution. But those he had listened to showed a divergence from chance that was statistically significant – retro PK was apparently real. In subsequent experiments, Schmidt tried playing another set of REG target clicks four times to the PK agent – and found that the divergence from chance of those clicks was approximately four times that of the first set.

Other experimenters have also succeeded in demonstrating retro PK effects and, however counterintuitive, or absurd according to the ordinary rules of common sense, retro PK may seem to be, it seems likely that it may exist. It also explains many of the results in parapsychology that have so far proved utterly baffling. If so, retro PK is of the first importance and must be taken into account: its implications for the evolution of parapsychology as a science are extremely far-reaching. First, however, the role of retro PK

In 1981, the author experienced what appeared to be a successful case of the use of retro PK. Watching the runners being paraded in the collecting ring before the Grand National (below), he had a sudden hunch that Aldaniti was going to win. He placed a bet, deciding to act consistently with the observation theories and provide himself with vivid and repeated feedback of the result. Aldaniti won (bottom) – and, by pure chance, the author happened to watch no less than six replays of the finish of the race on television. He thus boosted his retro PK – which may account for his hunch

as the mechanism behind all ESP must be clarified.

Suppose you are acting as a subject in an ESP test using playing cards. You pick up a card, face down, and try to guess its identity. Since there are no clues given, in guessing you could legitimately be seen as acting as an REG of a rather complicated and imperfect sort. After you have called out your guess, you are allowed to turn the card over. Now, as soon as you know the real identity of the card, you can, if you wish, immediately try to influence yourself in your own past – of a few seconds ago – by exerting retro PK to make yourself call out the correct card. If quantal reactions in your brain are responsible for your card calling, you could regard yourself as a quantum-driven REG accessible to retro PK!

But, the sceptic will object, if the call is wrong, no amount of retro PK will make it right, and so in that case retro PK is completely pointless. If it is correct, retro PK is unnecessary because nothing will change a right call into a wrong one, so in neither case is it worth attempting to use retro PK. However, this is just where 'common sense'

A dowsing experiment that can be carried out at home to test retro PK. You need a button on a piece of string to act as a pendulum, and some coins to act as targets. Place the coins on a table, and swing the pendulum over them, noting how it reacts when it is above a coin (left). Go out of the room, and ask someone to rearrange the coins and cover them with a newspaper (below left). Swing the pendulum above the newspaper and, when you feel sure of the locations of the coins, lift the newspaper to reveal their true positions. According to the observation theories, this is the important moment of the experiment – you now send a telepathic message concerning the true positions of the coins across time to yourself of just a few moments before, as you swung the pendulum

can lead the sceptic into logical falsehood. Yes, if one found, on turning over the card, that the call was incorrect, one would not bother to exert retro PK. But the accuracy of the call always reflects the amount of retro PK you are going to exert in the future – so one way of increasing the percentage of calls you get right is to attempt to produce lots of retro PK for all of them. If you don't bother, Schmidt's theory clearly predicts failure.

Now of course participants in ESP experiments have never – yet – deliberately tried to exert retro PK on themselves, and yet many ESP experiments have had high success rates. Thus, if ESP is indeed mediated by retro PK, it must be possible for this to happen without the conscious knowledge of the person concerned – and here very far-reaching consequences of the observation theories begin

The numbers racket

Many parapsychological experiments rely heavily on the use of statistical analysis. In particular, many of them use the mysterious notion of statistical significance. This is actually no more than a measure of the unlikelihood of the event in question occurring by chance. If, for example, the results of an experiment are said to be significant at the 5 per cent level, this means that there is a probability of no more than 5 per cent of them happening by chance.

In Helmut Schmidt's experiment, the cassettes and tapes cannot be checked at the beginning of the experiment, as their form then becomes immutable and retro PK can have no effect. The only alternative is to assume that they originally carried a record of a truly random REG output – and measure how much the records altered by retro PK differ from a random distribution. In Schmidt's experiment, the cassettes and tapes showed a divergence from chance that was statistically significant. But it is just possible that the original records may not have contained random distributions – and a solid proof of the existence of retro PK would require a far greater number of experiments.

to become apparent. There is no reason in principle why *everyone* involved in the experiment – experimenters, score checkers, analysers, even the people who, at some future date, read reports of the results of the experiment, should not influence the ESP subject at the point at which he makes his call. And this is, indeed, what the data of parapsychology experiments imply.

The problems for parapsychology may go even further. As soon as the results of experiments are published they are made accessible to a large number of people, all of whom can then produce effects.

However, the observation theories have produced a number of practical guidelines for increasing the effectiveness of your own ESP. First, do not tell sceptical people about your ESP experiences and experiments – they are thereby given access to influencing your results. Second, be careful in selecting the people who are to be involved in your psychic ventures – they too will affect your results. Third, try to view your role as an ESP percipient as passive. You are not as it were reaching out to the world to wrench off information, but acting merely as a passive object to be acted upon by your own retro PK and the retro PK of later observers of your efforts. Fourth, try to arrange things in such a way that you become acquainted with the results of your ESP attempts at a time when you are feeling happy and optimistic, not ill, tired or depressed. Fifth, ensure that a number of people 'observe' your results – this should increase the chances of your ESP guesses being correct. This is not a fruitless exercise, as your guesses will reflect the total amount of retro PK that you are able to bring to them. If you can recruit a group of highly psychic friends to examine your results, so much the better. Lastly, you can use real-life situations as a training ground. Here are some examples.

In 1981 the author experienced a spontaneous ESP experience that illustrates the observation theories in action. It was on the occasion of the Grand National. The author happened to be sitting watching the television, which was showing the horses parading in the collecting ring prior to the race. At the sight of Aldaniti the author felt a striking feeling of certainty that *this* horse would win. The author is not a betting man and has never had a similar experience, and a battle ensued between his habitual disinclination to visit a betting shop and his intuitive certainty that Aldaniti would win. Eventually he placed a bet, deciding to try as far as possible to act consistently with the observation theory and provide himself with as vivid and repeated feedback of the race as possible, in order to increase his chances of winning the bet. He then watched the race, and Aldaniti duly won. However, and this is the point of the story, by pure chance (the author watches little television) he happened to watch a number of other replays of the finish of the 1981 Grand National on television; in all, he saw six. This is the only race of which the author has ever seen more than one replay, and it seems an interesting and suggestive coincidence that this is the only race about which the author has had an ESP 'hunch'. The repeated and emotionally exciting feedback provided by the six replays of the race should, according to the observation theories, boost his retro PK massively. This incident seems a textbook demonstration of the use of retro PK to provide accurate ESP impressions.

In what was possibly an example of retro PK engineered by the cosmic joker, a Mrs Jones was out driving one day (below) when she was struck by a sudden fear that her house might be burning down. She hurried home – to find her house perfectly safe, and some fire insurance literature tucked into the front door (bottom). Was this retro PK – or was it merely a case of precognition in which the 'noise' obscured the 'signal'?

The observation theories form part of an exciting frontier area of parapsychology and may one day solve the riddle of how psi works. Many of the ideas involved may at first sight seem bizarre and counterintuitive – but then it is perhaps hardly surprising that something as strange as psi should demand an equally exotic explanation. It is interesting to make informal tests of some of the predictions of the observation theories, which can easily be done in real life. But understanding the observation theories is trickier than it may seem – before you claim to know what they are about, try explaining them to a friend!

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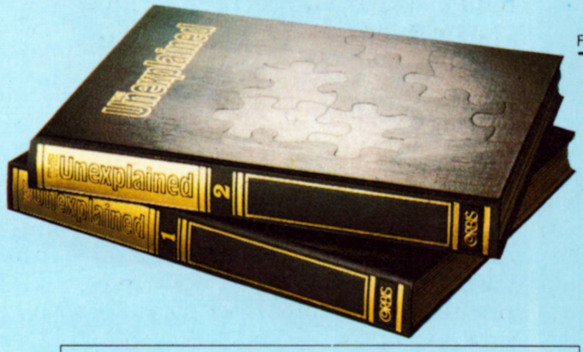

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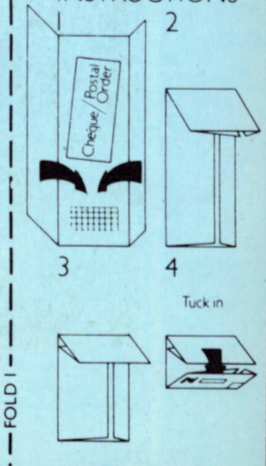

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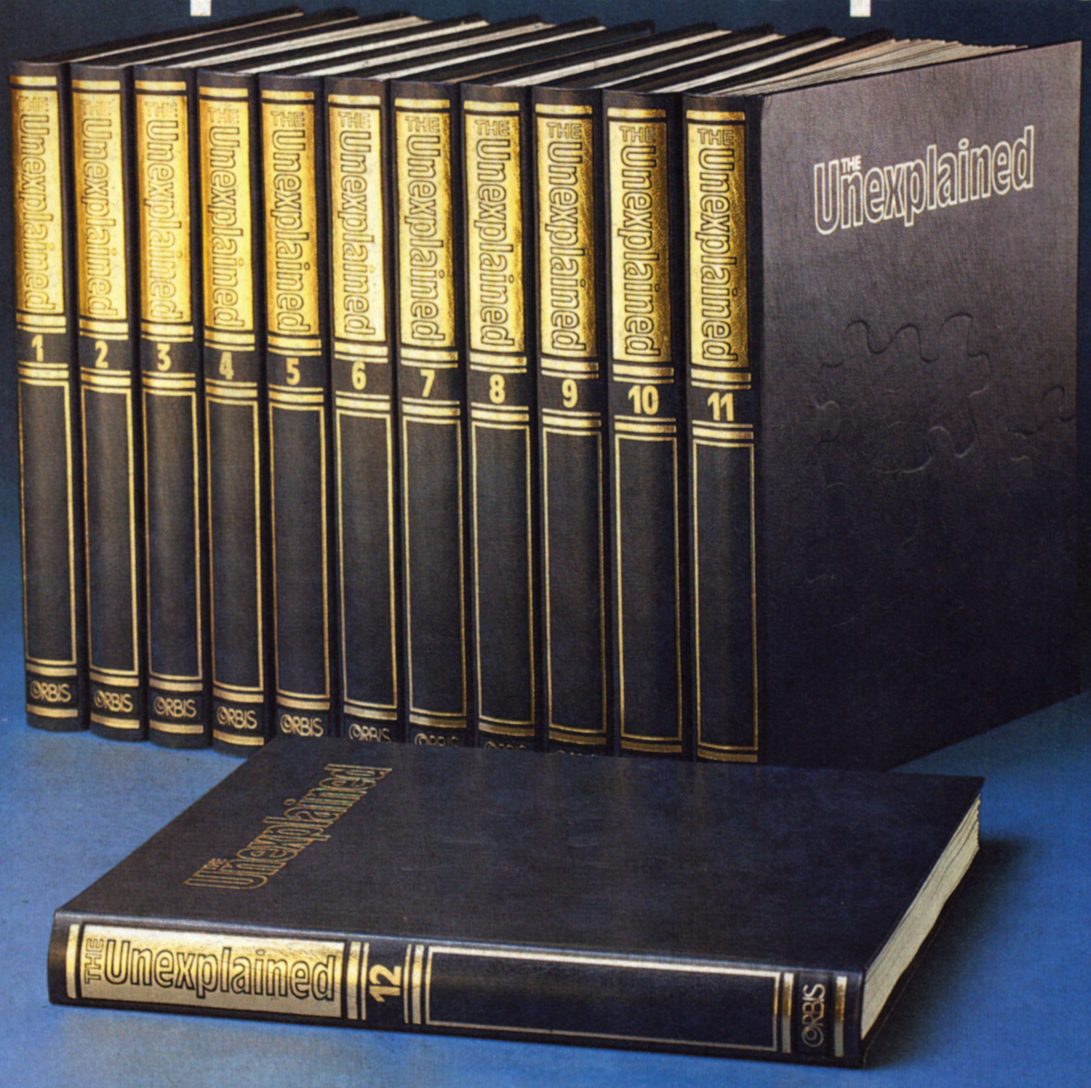

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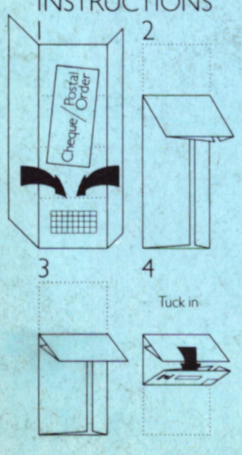

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